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With a great sum obtained I this freedom. Acts 22 28.

Starting from either of two premises sometimes ~~on very apt to~~ people arrive at the conclusion that no such freedom of choice and action for our minds, as we are wont to assume, really exists. Theologians filled with the idea of the absolute power of God, have said that they could not admit the freedom of the human soul, because then there would be a province filled with activities which God did not determine. The Eternal mind, they have thought, could not be Lord and governor of all that is, unless He alone decided the fate of the soul. On the other hand, the scientist, who sees that throughout nature everything is guided by an

absoluti ~~law of cause and effect~~ method, to a certain end. I strongly
inclines to reason from analogy that all
movements of the mind are predetermined in
the same fashion, by the causes out of which
they spring; and that however it may seem
to us, our states of consciousness follow each
other in accordance with a rigid law which
leaves no room for freedom. We have to
admit that it seems difficult to escape the
logic of these conclusions. At the same
time he is but young in thought who has
not learned to be wary of giving up an
idea, merely because that and some other
idea appear to be mutually exclusive.
It is much safer to keep reasonably close
to the approved facts of experience, even though
our general theories conflict. Scientific
speculation has found it necessary to affirm
the existence of a light-bearing ether, which
is supposed to fill all celestial spaces; and

curiously enough, in trying to account for the phenomena of light, the scientific mind is led to declare that this ether must be far more solid than any metal or mineral we know, while at the same time it opposes no resistance whatever to the movements of the heavenly bodies. One would think that a school of thought which describes one and the same substance by such contradictory terms as to call it both a perfect fluid and a perfect solid, need not revile religion because, in dealing with spiritual things, it asserts at the same time that God is absolute king and that man is free.—

But whatever we think of the divine government, nothing can ever beat it out of us that freedom of choice is the soul's birthright. We are continually taking shame to ourselves for our faults, and feeling that

some credit is due us for our virtues; and this
~~preceding~~ which would be utterly ~~nonsensical~~ foolish if,
like a line, we were the result of causes over
which we have no control. In our judgement of
others we proceed always upon the assumption
that they might have done differently: that it
was in them to resist and conquer the temptation
by which they were overthrown, if they had
chosen to assert that power. — No man has
shown us, or can show us, a law of the
mind which decides for us what our thoughts
and actions shall be. The nearest approach
to this is a demonstration that while the
mind rarely drifts, like every other drifting
thing, it follows the line of least resistance.
But we have examples without end to shew
us that the mind does not need to drift,
and that when it determines to take its
destiny into its own hands, there is no

~~form~~ power of outward circumstance, no force of bondily, no bonds of habit, which it cannot in some measure overcome. The power which some minds undoubtedly possess to shape a course directly in the face of every "wind of destiny" is, presumably, latent in all minds; and this for all practical purposes is the freedom of the soul. If the officers of a steamship have allowed the fire under the boilers to become so low that the vessel loses headway and lies like a log upon the waters, that does not alter the fact that the ship was meant to be, and might be, independent of wind and tide. If idle and indifferent humanity, not using its power of choice, is tossed to and fro like a waif on the sea of existence, that does not alter the fact that the soul was created to be free. — This then is the fact of consciousness. We hold every mind to be in the last instance responsible for what

it is. Then are palliating or extenuating considerations. But we always go back to a point when the mind might have made a different choice, which would have altered the whole future career. Then is no Calvinist with his belief in predestination; no follower of the Arabian prophet with his blind reliance upon fate. ^ no scientific believer in absolute law; who, in his practical judgments of men ~~those he is injured or helped~~ does not assume that each mind is free to do good or evil as it shall choose. In view of this fact, and considering moreover that all our moral life, together with our whole system of law and equity, is but a kind of tragic farce on any other supposition, we may say that if we know anything we know the essential freedom of our own minds. — Then is, in us, a power, not indeed to will ourselves at once into heaven or hell, but at each moment to

take either of two diverging lines opening before us, whose ultimate projection through the years and ages lead as far apart as the ~~best~~ heights of blessedness, and the lowest depths of degradation. Such freedom must needs impose a heavy load of responsibility, and

~~How strange as it may sound yet I suppose it to be true, that the perception of this freedom, and~~ the feeling of uncertainty which it produces, is one root of all the tyrannies and despotisms from which the world has suffered. It is not so much that men have misprized the great boon of liberty, but they have been frightened by it, and have sought by means of one and another authority to ward off its supposed dangers. For though it is very common to suppose that these despotisms of the past have arisen, simply as lions and tigers acquire a supremacy of the jungle by the terror they inspire, yet the world has never been quite so bad as

that view of this case would imply. No doubt there have been, in all times ~~plenty of~~ designing and unscrupulous men, ready to use all the power they could grasp into their hands for purely selfish ends. But why have the great mass of their fellows submitted so tamely to their exactions? Not alone through slavish fear ~~of the world's Master~~, but because ~~fear, but because~~, of two evils, or fancied evils, ~~to right~~ they were ~~ready~~ disposed to choose the least. ~~Why was it so easy a~~ ~~France, at the close of the last century, for~~ ~~one man to make himself absolute Master~~ ~~of the resources of this Nation? Because~~, After the horrors of the French Revolution, the first Napoleon appeared not only as a conqueror but as a deliverer, and was welcomed as such, that would restore to society a decent amount of law and order. ~~Why do~~ The millions of India ~~a proud and high spirited race~~, submit to-day to the

dominion of a mere handful of Englishmen.*
Because, however much their race-pride may
be offended, they see very clearly that under
this rule their country is more happy and
prosperous than it ever be without it.—
So in all times, not alone fear of the tyrant,
but a still greater dread of the divisions and
distractions that might ensue without him,
has been the real bulwark of despotic power.—
The case is not different in religion. If
you picture to yourself the priest as ~~a knave~~ an utterly
~~and a swindler~~ selfish man deliberately planting in the
common mind a horror of superstitions for his own advantage,
that is, at most, only a little fraction of the
true explanation of spiritual despotisms.—
It is not difficult to see ~~for yourself~~ how the case has looked to
men in past ages. Here is the soul of
man created free; that means poised between
the two great forces of good and evil on
either hand; ready to be swayed in either

direction, and holding something like equal
criminal
possibilities of a virtuous and a ~~deathish~~
career.- Each one may feel reasonably sure
of himself: but what is his warrant that
his fellows will incline to choose the good?
~~what is his assurance that at least~~
one
~~half~~ this race of ~~men~~ minds will not incline to
evil, and perhaps that half which, being best
furnished with ingenuity, is most capable of
mischief? In view of the ~~ignorance~~ weakness
and ignorance of men; in view of the crimes
that are committed in the name of liberty and
the abuse of their freedom of which people are
continually guilty, ~~it~~ is it surprising that
the world, thus far, has for the most part
distrusted every attempt at emancipation,
and clung to authority, in both church and
state, as to the one rock of its salvation!
Just because men have been so firmly
persuaded of the inborn freedom of the soul

they have sought and maintained ~~a~~ a refuge
from the uncertainties of their situation in
creeds and customs supposed to be given by
infallible authority. ~~Each one might see that~~
~~their faith was a fact~~
the tradition on which ~~by itself and to all~~ this authority depended
was only formally; and yet, so long as
it would stand, might fight for it with all his
might, because it made a law and a method
~~where~~ without it, so far as he could see,
~~nothing but chaos was likely to supervene.~~
Even to us, if we lean out over faith in the overruling
~~Think of it as a fact by itself, and to all~~
~~to~~ power of God,
~~of~~ ~~to~~. This truth that the soul of man is
somewhere free, not bound by any chain of
law, but balanced between the two opposing
forces of good and evil, so that it may incline
is apt to be a source of disquieting
to either side, ~~is a fact~~ thoughts. It is
Too much
like living on the edge of a volcano, to
dwell in a society whose incalculable powers
may at any moment gather themselves
together for a vast explosion. This is how

the representatives of spiritual authority shall look upon the world; and their alone demands from us some sympathy. When we remember how often we ourselves long for a benevolent despotism, how we defend great numbers of our fellow citizens and predict disaster from any change which they shall freely make, let us not be too scornful of those who have devised, or submitted to, the tyrannies of the past.

When we speak of a man like Philip of Spain as an "honest fool," let us temper that judgment by the knowledge that this ruthless king was fighting for what he sincerely believed to be the world's one safeguard against the dominion of evil and the extinction of civilization. Those who think of the Catholic power of the middle ages as nothing but a tissue of gross and debasing superstitions, do not begin to understand the true secret of its strength. That power, from the very beginning was

This then is how it comes about that the world has been forced to pay such an enormous price for the civil and religious liberty ~~which~~ that we now enjoy. It has been wrung from the hard hand of a power ~~which~~ that has honestly believed itself to be God's vicegerent upon earth, and which has grasped the sword as only they can grasp it, who think they stand for heaven's own cause. If the power of Rome had been what hateful Protestant imaginations have made of it; a mass of villainous impostures, it could have bound the world with nothing better than tapes of sand. The strength of its wonderful command has been ~~the~~ its firm persuasion that man was not to be trusted with the freedom which God has bestowed upon him, and that his salvation could only be secured by its divinely appointed authority.

And as distrust of human nature has furnished the might of those who have fought against

Emancipation of every kind. So trust in man, has been the ~~theory~~ watchword of all champions of liberty. - Here runs the line of cleavage between the old spirit and the new; and in these days of growing liberality, when, through the softening of ancient dogmas, the iron hand of absolute authority in religion, begins to sheath itself in velvet, it is useful to remember this distinction. - Spite of all humane and charitable sentiments that may be uttered, we are bound to ask this last question: what faith have you in man, as a child of God, can be trusted to think for himself, to follow his own conscience, and use his birthright of freedom, ~~though often~~ ~~certainly, if it is the same~~ as to keep his steps in an upward way? So long as this faith is lacking, and the church stands upon an infinite divine right of rule, not upon a frank appeal to the reason and conscience of mankind, it is too soon for the forces of freedom to disband. -

I hold, for one, that little is to be gained at the present time through any kind of controversy in religion that can be avoided, and that a peaceful ~~fight~~ growth is ensuring for us ~~all~~ what no fight could win. But when it comes to a sober estimate of the progress that has been made toward free institutions, either in church or state, any one can see that their only sure foundation is a strong belief in the fundamental integrity of human nature, and that, until the representatives of ecclesiastical power are converted to this belief, they have only a certain veneer of liberality. No one believes in turning loose upon the world, without restraint, a horde of cutthroats and ruffians. No one supposes that a menagerie of wild beasts can be safely conducted by opening the doors of the cages, and giving wolves and tigers full liberty to go where they please. If that is what men essentially are, and the old doctrine of total depravity is even in any far off sense

an adequate representation of the natural
tendencies of the human heart, than of all follies
into which the world could plunge. that of
universal liberty would be the most insane.
When, at the beginning of this century a small band
of thinkers began to preach the dignity of man.
and to maintain against the established theories of Christendom
to maintain that this, so-called, priest and thatched
Temple of the holy Spirit was merely antiquated
and incomplete, that was much more than a
harmless bit of theological speculation. It was
the whole spirit of the Protestant movement, coming
at last to an intelligent perception of the ground
on which it stood, and fortifying itself in the
only position where it is not overlooked by its
ancient enemy: Freedom in Self-government in
religion, such as our fathers held for, when man
is by nature a child of Satan - not a child of
God, is such a manifest absurdity, that one
only wonders why it was so long before the
advocates of religious liberty began to shake
off the fetters of national Theology.

Now when we come to give account of that faith in human nature which underlies ~~all that~~ the ~~is~~ most characteristic features of the age in which we live, we have to begin by admitting that what its enemies say of it is in some measure true; It is. to considerable extent unreasoning and blind. We are not to think any the worse of it for that however; but rather we are to regard it as one of those voices of nature which are often wiser than science itself. so that the fruit of it appears to be a higher order of manhood. It is essentially a religious faith. this new belief in man; and like all religious trust, it springs up you cannot tell exactly how or why, (except that it comes forth from the secret places of the soul,) and you cannot entirely explain the ground on which it stands. Every great faith that has really shaped the destiny of nations, has had a paramount deeper and stronger than man's understanding. ~~It~~ It has grown somehow out of the heart of mankind, and not till ~~then~~

do begin to ask why should we trust man under free conditions, the only answer is that we trust - God, the creator of man. It is a part of ~~that~~ our new belief in Nature, as God's workmanship and revelation. We are not blind to what theologians have called the awful fact of sin; but we insist that the free soul of man, which God has made, left to itself, will of its own motion fight and strive toward heaven, not sink from choice into the depths of evil. If any are troubled over the seeming irreligion of the times, let them consider what giant strides this living faith in a present ~~only~~ Spirit has made in recent years, and be sure that this hearts' trust in an infinite Goodness is by no means departing from mankind. Amid the decay of ancient forms of belief this implicit confidence that what is good and true in our life will make its way to victory over all that is evil and impure stands as a foundation of faith not to be shaken, and the basis on

which new structures of religion are sure to rise.

With a great price this freedom that comes to us so cheaply has been obtained. Aside from all the fearful wars that a growing demand for liberty has engendered, and which might perhaps be tabulated into some kind of estimate, the spiritual anguish that it has cost timid minds to leave the shelter of their ancient creeds and customs, and strike forth for themselves into the open air of God's Universe, is far beyond our calculation. Nay, this is a certain price that we must continually pay for the privilege of calling ourselves free men, both in civil life and in our mental estate. Of all forms of government, Democracy appears to be the most cumbrous and slow. Evils, and follies, and abuses which the strong hand of monarchy would quickly weed out of existence, with us can only be crushed by the slower process of living them down, and with all

the patience we can command, our indignation and disgust must sometimes mount to fever heat, while stupidities and immoralities that have climbed into places of high command flaunt their defiance in our face.

In religion, too, freedom has its disadvantages, ~~that~~ which we must bear with as we can. No church that admits full rights of free speech and free inquiry, and puts the religious sentiment of the people in full command, can develop that compact and smooth machinery ~~through~~ which the will of the priest makes itself felt. Free institutions everywhere will halt and stumble somewhat on their way, where the despotism that is guided by a single will moves like a huge machine.—

But let the discomforts and the dangers of liberty be much greater than they are; who that has known what it is to be free would again entangle himself with any yoke of bondage? Who has once felt the inspiring conf[illegible] that God's truth must win in

the end; and who has opened his mind toward all sources of information, asking only to know the reality as it stands in God's sight, and would then go back to the position of those whose divine certainties are no more than a castle of cards, which they jealously guard from every new wind of opinion, lest it may be suddenly demolished? — Who would barter the dignity and self-respect that he acquires in his own eyes, from knowing that spiritually at least, he is no man's slave, — for any fancied security that may be gained in putting ones intellect and conscience in pawn to another mind?

Add to this that we are instructed by all our dealings with nature, to regard freedom as the indispensable condition of rugged health, and however we may sigh for the ease and comfort that may be found under strong authority, and within what is called the "safe anchorage of creeds," we cannot seriously think that the modern mind has

~~taken a~~ turned into a mistaken path.
At all times we hear a little undercurrent
of wonder, whether of late the world has
not been emancipating itself too fast, and
because the Kingdom of God does not immed-
iately appear the faith of many often
falters. Just at present we are more
than commonly tempted to wish for some
autocratic ~~power~~ will that might deliver
us from quicksands in which the nation
seems to be floundering, almost impotent.

But a patient appeal to the good
sense of the people, will bring us out of
our troubles at last, and in no other
way can we so much hasten that day of
deliverance as by an unshaken confidence
that it is coming like an appointed day
of the Lord. The freedom that we have
inherited, or won, is something more than
our private possession. It is God's chosen
way for the world's advance, and we are
to guard and maintain it. Through all
difficulty and all peril, as the only road

by which the future can be made better than the past.

Let it be on our lips no light boast, but a touch of deep and solemn moment that in religion we are free; and not for the sake of what has been already accomplished, but as the only foundation for a christlike life which all men everywhere should be free.